

# Measuring Your Child's Temperature

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## **When should I measure my child's temperature?**

If your child feels warm, looks flushed, is sweating or shaking, you may think they have a fever. You should check their temperature with a thermometer to be sure.

## **What type of thermometer should I use?**

A basic digital thermometer is the best type to use. You can also use a temporal artery thermometer or a tympanic thermometer but these are more expensive. We do not recommend pacifier thermometers or fever strips.

You should not use a mercury thermometer - the silver liquid inside is dangerous if it breaks. We recommend that you contact your local waste disposal center to find out how to dispose of any mercury thermometers you have in your house.

## **Where should I put the thermometer?**

There are several ways to measure body temperature. Taking the temperature in the rectum is the most accurate. Taking the temperature by mouth or ear is accurate if done properly. Using the armpit is the least accurate.

- If your child is **3 months to 4-years old**, using the rectum is the best. If your child is older than 6 months, you can use an ear thermometer (however, rectum is still the best choice).
- If your child is **older than 4 years old**, take their temperature by mouth.

## **How do I take a rectal temperature?**

- Clean the end of the thermometer with soap and water. Rinse with cool water.
- Have your child lie stomach-down on your lap.
- Put some petroleum jelly on the end of the thermometer and on the rectum (the opening of the anus).
- Put the thermometer gently into the rectum about 1 inch (if the child is less than 6 months old, put it in only about ½ inch).
- Hold your child still. If you are using a glass thermometer, leave it in for 2 minutes. If you are using a digital thermometer, take it out when you hear the signal (usually a series of beeps).
- Label your rectal thermometer so you don't accidentally use it for checking an oral temperature.

**Your child has a fever if the rectal temperature is over 100.4° Fahrenheit (38° Celcius).**

## **How do I take a temperature by mouth?**

- Be sure your child has not had a cold or hot drink in the last 30 minutes.
- Put the tip of the thermometer under one side of the tongue and toward the back. It's important to put it in the right place.
- Have your child hold the thermometer in place with their lips and fingers (not teeth). If you are using a glass thermometer, leave it in for 3 minutes. If you are using a digital thermometer, take it out when you hear the signal (usually a series of beeps).

**Your child has a fever if the temperature is over 100.4° Fahrenheit (38° Celcius).**

## **How do I take an ear temperature?**

- If your child has been outdoors on a cold day, they need to be inside for 15 minutes before you can take their temperature.

- Pull their ear backward to straighten the ear canal. Place the end of the thermometer into your child's ear canal and press the button.
- It only takes about 2 seconds to take the temperature.

**Your child has a fever if the temperature is over 100.4° Fahrenheit  
(38° Celcius)**

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